

## 2.0 PURPOSE and NEED



### 2.1 *The Need for the Proposed Action*

#### 2.1.1 ACCESSIBILITY

An integral part of the mission statement for the SMMNRA is “to provide an inter-linking system of parklands and open spaces that offer compatible recreation and education opportunities that are accessible to a diverse public” (emphasis added).

Accessibility of the various recreational opportunities in the core of the SMMNRA is often problematic. Some of the people who would most benefit from the facilities provided in the recreation area – low-income persons and others that are dependent on public transportation – are precluded from visiting many of the facilities because there is no public transportation to them. These people are limited to those facilities around the fringes of the park that are directly accessible from Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) buses or other local bus transit services. These transit-accessible recreational facilities are among the most crowded in the entire SMMNRA.

In addition to lack of public transportation, those who do have access to private vehicles are often frustrated in their attempts to utilize various facilities by limited public parking, which fills rapidly on weekends when the weather is pleasant. (In the Santa Monica Mountains, the weather is usually comfortable throughout the year.) Therefore, some facilities within the SMMNRA are over-utilized due to abundant parking, while others are under-utilized because there is not enough parking.

Another frustration for the visitor in a private automobile is traffic congestion on the roads serving the recreational facilities in the SMMNRA (these roads are subject to congestion from commuters on weekdays and from general traffic on weekends). These roads are also steep, narrow, and windy due to the difficult terrain that they cross. Many people feel uncomfortable driving on these kinds of roads, which are rare in southern California. Because of the relatively narrow rights-of-way, biking or hiking on these roadways is not a safe option in many locations.

#### 2.1.2 AIR QUALITY

Because of its location in the South Coast Air Basin, the SMMNRA is plagued by some of the worst air quality in the nation. This is not a localized problem, but rather a regional one stemming from the fact

that there are so many cars and relatively limited public transportation. The South Coast Air Quality Management District is encouraging that agencies and developers pursue every opportunity to remove single-occupant vehicles from the road and provide multiple-occupant transit in their place. If this transit is also provided by low- or zero-emissions vehicles, the benefits to regional air quality are greatly increased.

### **2.1.3 PARKING**

As discussed above, many of the facilities within the SMMNRA have limited parking, restricting their potential for providing recreation opportunities. These facilities include the Backbone Trail access points on Malibu Canyon Road and Kanan Dume Road, Solstice Canyon, and Rocky Oaks. Even some of the parks with larger parking areas, such as Tapia Park, Malibu Lagoon State Beach, Zuma Beach, Westward Beach, and Peter Strauss Ranch, still experience full utilization on busy weekends. Still others have no parking at all, such as Corral Canyon and Dan Blocker Beach. Increasing or providing parking at these locations would result in significant environmental impacts including loss of open space and recreational areas and effects on sensitive habitats and resources.

### **2.1.4 THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

Although the SMMNRA includes many high-quality visitor facilities, there are numerous opportunities to provide more amenities to increase the recreational and educational experience for park visitors. These opportunities include amenities aimed at comfort, such as benches, restrooms, and covered areas, as well as those aimed at education, such as interpretative signs and other information systems, especially if these improvements provide links and connections to other facilities within the SMMNRA.

Of course, one of the most valuable improvements that can be made to the visitor experience is access, as discussed above. Demand for recreation in the SMMNRA averages 5,000 to 10,000 combined daily site visits. With such a demand, that can only increase with Southern California's rising population, limited access will become more of a problem throughout the SMMNRA.

### **2.1.5 INTERAGENCY COOPERATION**

Because of the multiple public agencies owning land in the SMMNRA, including NPS, CSP, SMMC, and the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors, coordination between these agencies to reach common goals is of maximum importance. Working together, these agencies have the ability to pool their resources, including human resources and funding, to meet many of the needs discussed above.

## ***2.2 The Purpose of the Proposed Action***

The purpose of the SMMNRA Heart-of-the-Park Shuttle Demonstration Project is to implement a shuttle system that serves the popular sites in the central portion of the SMMNRA. Integrating this service with local and regional transit service is also an important component of the project's purpose.

The general project goals for the SMMNRA Heart-of-the-Park Shuttle Demonstration Project are:

- To provide an alternative to private vehicles and reduce trips
- To improve air quality and reduce vehicle impacts and parking demand
- To provide a high-quality visitor experience with quality facilities and amenities
- To work with public agency partners to make the service mutually beneficial and to share facilities and costs